

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a suspension of a silicic particulate filler in a silicone material (*SM*) in which an aqueous suspension of silicic particulate filler is made hydrophobic by treating with at least one halogenated reagent, this treatment comprising a transfer of the silica made hydrophobic into a nonaqueous phase and at least one step for at least partial removal of water,

said method comprising:

a) preparing or using an aqueous silica suspension comprising: silica, water which is optionally acidified, and at least one hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator,

b) optionally incorporating part of the silicone material *SM* into the aqueous silica suspension obtained at the end of step a);

c) producing a modified hydrophobic silica filler by grafting hydrophobic units formed by $\equiv\text{Si}-(\text{R}^c)_{1 \text{ to } 3}$, where $\text{R}^c =$ ~~hydrogen~~ hydrogeno, $\text{C}_1\text{-C}_{30}$ alkyl, $\text{C}_2\text{-C}_{30}$ alkenyl, or aryl groups wherein[[,]] these groups R^c being optionally substituted, onto the silica by exposing the silica to halosilanes that are precursors of these units and by allowing the reaction to proceed, optionally in the hot state; wherein the halosilane precursors are present in a nonaqueous phase and the silica comprising the grafted hydrophobic units is transferred from the aqueous phase to the nonaqueous phase,

d) optionally, removing at least part of the aqueous phase comprising reaction by-products;

- e) optionally, cooling the reaction medium;
- f) optionally, removing the residual acidity of the nonaqueous phase by washing the non-aqueous with water;
- g) mixing the totality or the remainder of the silicone material *SM* with the modified hydrophobic silica;
- h) removing the residual water by evaporation; and
- i) recovering an oil which comprises a hydrophobic particulate filler suspension of the modified hydrophobic silica filler in a crosslinkable silicone material,

wherein said hydrophobic silica is not present as dried hydrophobic silica during said method.

2. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the pH of this suspension is ≤ 2 at least during step a).

3. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein at least one precursor of silicone resin is used in step a).

4. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising grafting functional units other than hydrophobic units onto silica by exposing the silica to halosilane precursors of these functional grafts.

5. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the silica comprises one or more precipitated silicas whose BET specific surface area is

between 50 and 400 m²/g and the dynamic viscosity at 25°C of the suspension during mixing is less than or equal to 300 Pa.s.

6. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator is an organic solvent.

7. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, further comprising acidifying the aqueous suspension (aqueous phase) using an acid or mixtures of acids.

8. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the silicone material *SM* comprises at least one oligoorganosiloxane.

9. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the precursor of the hydrophobic units is an alkylhalosilane.

10. (Currently Amended) A method for preparing a suspension of a precipitated silica powder in a silicone material (*SM*) comprising at least one oligoorganosiloxane, said method comprising:

- a) introducing into ~~the~~ a stirred vessel in the following order:
 - (1) an aqueous silica suspension of a precipitated silica powder, optionally added in several fractions, at least one hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator, and optionally an acid;

(2) halosilanes that are a precursor of the hydrophobic units:

-Si-(R^c)_{1 to 3} where R^c = C₁-C₃₀ alkyl or a C₂-C₃₀ alkenyl; and

(3) part of the silicone material (SM) comprising at least one oligoorganosiloxane;

- b) heating the medium to a temperature in the region of the reflux temperature of the hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator to form a hydrophobic silica ;
- c) optionally cooling the medium;
- d) separating the aqueous phase from the nonaqueous phase;
- e) removing the nonaqueous phase;
- f) optionally washing, at least once, the nonaqueous phase with an aqueous liquid and then removing the aqueous washing phase;
- g) mixing the optionally washed, nonaqueous silicone phase with all or the remainder of the silicone material SM; and
- h) recovering an oily suspension of hydrophobic particulate silicic filler in a crosslinkable silicone material SM₁

wherein said hydrophobic silica is not present as dried hydrophobic silica during said method.

11. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the ingredients are used in the following proportions (parts by dry weight for all ingredients that are not water):

- silica: 100;
- acid: 20 to 60;
- precursor of -Si-(R^c)_{1 to 3}, 5 to 500;

- H bond stabilizer/initiator: 0 to 20;
- *SM* oil: 40 to 2,000, of oligoorganosiloxane;
- water: 2 to 8,000.

12. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the silica used is mainly in the form of a slurry of precipitated silica(s).

13. - 16. (Cancelled)

17. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the pH of this suspension is ≤ 1 , at least during step a).

18. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 3, wherein the at least one precursor of silicone resin used in step a) is a silicate.

19. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 3, wherein the at least one precursor of silicone resin used in step a) is a sodium silicate.

20. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 4, wherein the functional units other than hydrophobic units are selected from the group consisting of the following functions: bactericidal, bacteriostatic, chromophoric, fluorescence, antifouling, and combinations thereof.

21. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 5, wherein the dynamic viscosity at 25°C of the suspension during mixing is less than or equal to 150 Pa.s.

22. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator is chosen from organic solvents selected from the group consisting of alcohols, ketones, amides, alkanes and mixtures thereof.

23. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the acidification of the aqueous suspension (aqueous phase) is carried out using an inorganic acid.

24. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the acidification of the aqueous suspension (aqueous phase) is carried out using an acid selected from the group consisting of HCl, H₂SO₄, H₃PO₄ and mixtures thereof.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the silicone material *SM* comprises at least one diorganosiloxane.

26. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the silicone material *SM* comprises hexamethyldisiloxane.

27. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the precursor of hydrophobic units is an alkylchlorosilane.

28. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 1, wherein the precursor of hydrophobic units is a methylchlorosilane.

29. (Previously Presented) The method of Claim 10, wherein the method has at least one of the following characteristics:

- a). the at least one hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator comprises isopropyl alcohol;
- b). the aqueous silica suspension comprises HCl;
- c). the halosilanes that is a precursor of the hydrophobic units comprises $(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{SiCl}$;
- d). the at least one oligoorganosiloxane comprises hexamethyldisiloxane;
- e). heating the medium is heated to a temperature in the region of the reflux temperature of the hydrogen bond stabilizer/initiator to form a hydrophobic silica ;
- f). the aqueous phase is separated from the nonaqueous phase by decantation; and
- g). the silicone material SM comprises at least one polyorganosiloxane (POS).

30. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 11, wherein the proportion of the ingredients has at least one of the following characteristics:

- acid: from 30 to 50;
- precursor of $-\text{Si}-(\text{R}^c)_{1 \text{ to } 3}$: from 10 to 200;
- H bond stabilizer/initiator: from 1 to 10; and
- water: 200 to 1,000.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to Claim 10, wherein the various ingredients are used in the following proportions (parts by dry weight for all that is not water):

silica: 100;

acid: 30 to 50;

precursor of $-\text{Si}(\text{R}^c)_{1 \text{ to } 3}$: 10 to 200;

H bond stabilizer/initiator: 1 to 10;

SM oil: 40 to 2,000; and

water: 200 to 1,000.